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Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 OMB-01 DHA-05 MCT-01 /064 W
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R 241250Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5593
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMCONSUL MADRAS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 11928

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IN, CE
SUBJ: GOI CONCERN OVER VIOLENCE IN SRI LANKA

1. SEVERAL ARTICLES IN THE INDIAN PRESS HAVE HIGH-LIGHTED BOTH GOI CONCERN FOR THE SAFETY OF INDIAN NATIONALS LIVING IN SRI LANKA AND THE GROWING PRESSURE ON THE GOI FROM TAMIL NADU'S DMK TO DO SOMETHING TO PROTECT INDIAN AND SRI LANKAN TAMILS FROM THAT COUNTRY'S POLITICAL VIOLENCE.

2. THE PRESS REPORTED ON AUGUST 23 THE SUMMONING OF SRI LANKA'S ACTING HIGH COMMISSIONER TO THE MEA, WHERE SECRETARY M.A. VELLODI CONVEYED TO HIM GOI CONCERN AT RECENT INCIDENTS INVOLVING INDIAN NATIONALS. VELLODI REPORTEDLY EXPRESSED HOPE THAT THE GSL WOULD TAKE "EVERY POSSIBLE STEP" TO PROTECT THEM. G.K. REDDY OBSERVED IN A FEATURED ARTICLE IN THE HINDU THAT THE GOI IS "DOUBLY ANXIOUS THAT THESE SAD EVENTS IN SRI LANKA SHISLD NOT MAR THE VERY CORDIAL RELATIONS EXISTING BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE SO MUCH IN COMMON."

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3. IN TAMIL NADU, THE OPPOSITION DMK IS PLANNING A GENERAL STRIKE AUGUST 24 IN OBSERVANCE OF "SRI LANKAN TAMILS PROTECTION DAY." THE PARTY HAS APPEALED TO EMPLOYERS TO CLOSE BUSINESSES THAT DAY AND INVITED THE PUBLIC TO JOIN DMK-LED PROCESSIONS PROTESTING "ATROCITIES" COMMITTED AGAINST SRI LANKAN TAMILS. CONGEN MADRAS REPORTS THAT THE DMK DAILY THERE HAS

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CONTRIBUTED TO THE OCCASION BY PUBLISHING INFLAMMATORY "ATROCITY" STORIES. IN ADDITION, DMK PRESIDENT M KARUNANIDHI ASKED PRIME MINISTER DESAI ON AUGUST 22 TO "INTERVENE TO PROTECT THE INTERESTS OF THE SRI LANKAN TAMILS." THE T-N CHIEF MINISTER SENT THE PRIME MINISTER A SIMILAR MESSAGE THE NEXT DAY, URGING THAT A GOI MINISTER BE SENT TO STUDY THE STATE OF AFFAIRS IN SRI LANKA. IN THE T-N LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY, THE STATE FINANCE MINISTER HAS URGED THE DMK TO ABANDON ITS STRIKE PLANS TO AVOID AGGRAVATING THE SITUATION IN SRI LANKA. HE TOLD THE ASSEMBLY THAT THE GOI HAD ASSURED THE T-N STATE GOVERNMENT THAT STEPS WERE BEING TAKEN TO PROTECT THE LIVES AND PROPERTY OF SRI LANKAN TAMILS.

4. THREE NEW DELHI PAPERS RAN EDITORIALS AUGUST 24 REGRETTING SRI LANKA'S COMMUNAL VIOLENCE AND GENERALLY COMMENDING THE NEW GSL FOR ITS CONCILIATORY ATTITUDE TOWARD TAMILS GRIEVANCES. ALL THE EDITORIALS SUPPORTED THE TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY OF SRI LANKA. IT WAS ALSO NOTED THAT BOTH TAMILS AND SINHALESE HAD COMMITTED VIOLENT ACTS.

5. DURING AUGUST 24 CALL ON ACTING SRI LANKAN HIGH COMMISSIONER JAYAKODDY, HE TOLD EMBOFFS THAT SECRETARY VELLODI WAS OBLIGED TO EXPRESS GOI CONCERN FOR THE CONFIDENTIAL

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WELFARE OF ITS CITIZENS IN SRI LANKA, EVEN THOUGH HE KNEW THAT THOSE PEOPLE ACTING VIOLENTLY DID NOT DISCRIMINATE BETWEEN INDIAN AND SRI LANKAN CITIZENS. JAYAKODDY SAID THAT THE INDIAN HIGH COMMISSIONER IN COLOMBO WAS IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH GSL OFFICIALS, INCLUDING THE PRIME MINSTER. REGARDING THE DMK'S AGITATION IN TAMIL NADU, HE REMARKED THAT THERE WERE ALWAYS THOSE WHO SOUGHT TO MAKE POLITICAL CAPITAL OUT OF UNFORTUNATE SITUATIONS.
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